



TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS

Prince George's County, Maryland

Incorporated in 1896 ~ Sixth Oldest Municipality in PG County

WORKSESSION MINUTES SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson, Councilmembers (CM) Dennison and Kulpa-Eddy. Almoguera had an excused absence. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Murphy, Clerk Harper and C.P. Johnson. Engineers Brian Davila and Gary Dyson.

1. SIDEWALKS DESIGN & ENGINEERING FIELD TRIP (7:05 P.M. - 8:25 P.M.)

Mayor Calvo announced that the Council will go on a field trip with CP Johnson & Associates engineers to discuss design and engineering options for sidewalks the following priority 1 locations:

- Berwyn Road from Indian Creek Trail to 57th Avenue, 5500 - 5600 block, south side
- 57th Avenue from Berwyn Road to Pontiac Street, 8600 block, east side
- Pontiac Street from 58th to 57th Avenue, 5700 block, north side
- Cunningham Drive from Pontiac Street to Quebec Place, 8600 - 8700 block, east side
- 60th Avenue from Quebec Place to Greenbelt Road, 8700 - 8900 block, east side
- NOT VISITED Pontiac Street in front of BHES, Pontiac Street at Edmonston Road, and 8900 block of 63rd Avenue

1st location, Berwyn Road at Sports Park: The construction of a sidewalk from Berwyn Road Bridge to Sports Park will be relatively simple. With exception of hydrant and a trail sign, there are no obstacles. There is enough room for a grass buffer. However, the sidewalk should be lined up with the existing sidewalk on the bridge.

2nd location, Berwyn Road, 5600 block: Construction of a sidewalk between Sports Park and 57th Avenue will be complicated by trees, utility poles and drive. There is enough Town right-of-way for a grass buffer, but the sidewalks will have to meander in and out to get around the utility poles. Additionally, it will be necessary to re-grade some areas so that sidewalks will have the required 2% slope toward the street. Runoff from the sidewalks must be directed into the curb into people's yard. Permission from homeowners may be needed to remove trees growing too close to the Town right-of-way, and prune roots. A crosswalk on Berwyn Road would probably start a little before a utility pole located on the south side, and would connect to the future sidewalk on the east side of 57th Avenue.

3rd location, 57th Avenue, 8600 block: The Council expressed a preference to bump a sidewalk out into the road along the entire length of the block. This would require having to work around a number of large trees and utility poles sitting in the right-of-way. As a result, parking may have to be restricted to allow bus and emergency vehicles to get through. Mr. Davila said it would cost approximately \$50 per linear foot to build a 5' wide sidewalk using existing roadway, including per foot to remove and replace the existing curbs and gutters. The total cost for the entire block, an estimated at 300 feet in length, would be approximately \$15,000.

A bumped-out sidewalk on 57th Avenue would also present the opportunity to rebuild the three-way intersection at 57th Avenue, Pontiac Street and Quebec Street to improve visibility. The crosswalk would best be located around the corner on Pontiac Street and connect to a sidewalk on the north side of Pontiac Street near the storm drain.

4th location, Pontiac Street, 5700 block: This block has no major obstacles or steep grades that require special engineering solutions.

5th location, Cunningham Drive, 8600 block: This block of Cunningham Drive has a number of design challenges, including a steeply-sloped right-of-way, a driveway that needs to be moved, several mature trees and utility poles. The homeowner at the corner of Cunningham Drive and Pontiac Street has consented to have the driveway moved, so that a retaining wall can be built along the west side of his property. At least one mature tree will have to be removed and root systems of trees will have to be pruned to build a sidewalk. To get around a utility pole and a fire hydrant, the sidewalk may have to be bumped out into existing roadway.

6th location, Cunningham Drive, 8700 block: The Council recently discussed sidewalk options for the Pop's Park frontage when deciding to relocate the fence. I decided to place the fence such that a sidewalk would be far enough removed from trees to minimize impact on the roots, and allow for a green strip to be added which would act as a safety buffer for families walking to the playground. This option requires bumping the curb out into existing roadway. At the north end of the park, this would allow for the curb line to be straightened out and a landing to be built for a Quebec Place crosswalk. It was noted that narrowing the roadway to make it a tight fit for buses, especially if 2 buses pass each other. The possibility of installing a railing in the safety buffer was raised, especially near the gate.

7th location, 60th Avenue, 8700 block: This block has no significant slopes or obstacles, with the exception of one driveway that could no longer accommodate a property owner's car that is currently parked in the Town right-of-way.

8th location, 60th Avenue, 8800 block: This block has steep slopes, trees and driveways and the fire house. Construction of sidewalks will require significant re-grading of slopes, partial rebuilding of driveways, and/or building a retaining wall. Easements will be needed from the property owners to reconstruct their driveways so they do not exceed the maximum permitted slope of 10%. Fire house staff expressed concern about pedestrians crossing in front of the fire house. They would like sidewalks to be built on the opposite side of the street. Short of that, crosshatching of the driveways would be appropriate to alert pedestrians to fire trucks exiting the station. Fire house staff expressed no objections to their marquee being moved, if the cost is borne by the Town.

9th location, 60th Avenue, 8900 block: This block has steep slopes, several trees and hedges in the right-of-way requiring removal and/or root pruning and rebuilding of stairs and driveways. A retaining wall may need to be constructed at the property where the property owner is unlikely to grant an easement. Bumping the sidewalk out into the roadway is not a good solution as it would hinder fire trucks exiting the Town to respond to a call. However, a minimal bumping out of up to 2' is possible. The sidewalk would end at the southerly property line of the Shell gas station located at the corner of 60th Avenue and Greenbelt Road.

The Council returned to the Town office and resumed the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Sidewalks discussion: Mayor Calvo asked what decisions the Council needs to make tonight so that the engineers can move forward with designing sidewalks. Davila said no decisions are needed tonight. He has received enough input to come up with design proposals for the problem locations discussed during the town meeting. He will attempt to incorporate green buffers where possible and include an option for bumped-out sidewalks in the 8900 block of 60th Avenue, which the Town can discuss with the fire department. To complete the next design phase, a topographical survey first needs to be completed on which to base the designs. It will provide new information on location of property lines, slopes and elevations. Mr. Davila asked for clarification on the plans for Pop's Park.

Mayor Calvo said that the Council decided at the August 5 worksession to place sidewalks consistent with the Option 4 proposed for Pop's Park sidewalks. This calls for bumping curbs out into the existing roadway up to 4', while adding a green strip ranging from 3' and 10' in width along the Park frontage. The option includes a stormwater mitigation project at the north end of the park, which is no longer needed. The County has indicated that a stormwater mitigation project at the Works yard would provide sufficient offset.

Mayor Calvo said he prefers to have a straight curb and sidewalk and a consistent 3' green strip at Pop's Park. He thinks it is necessary to bump the curb 3' into the roadway at the Park's south end in order not to impact the tree roots too much. CM Almoguera and MPT Wilkinson said they would also like a green strip. Almoguera thought it was more important to have a straight, consistent sidewalk/green strip than to be as far away from the trees as possible. CM Kulpa-Eddy said that Option 4 proposed a 4' bump-out, which would make two-way traffic on Cunningham Drive tight. Mr. Davila said that any design he will come up with will have

roadway that is at least 26' wide.

MPT Wilkinson asked whether a retaining wall is needed for a sidewalk in front of Berwyn Heights Elementary School between the entrance and exit of the driveway. Mr. Davila said no retaining wall is proposed. However, a bump-out may be needed where the BHES sign is. Mayor Calvo noted that the pedestrian lane at Pontiac Street and Edmonston Road is bigger than he remembers. TA Murphy said that it was extended to serve as a bus stop pad and to line up with the Kenil Avenue crosswalk.

Announcements: CM Almoguera said that she will bring baby Matthew Antonio to the next few worksessions.

Calendar: The Council reviewed the calendar. An executive session to discuss directors' evaluations was scheduled for the October 7 worksession and the meeting discussion for the October 21 worksession. Clerk Harper plans to attend the MML fall conference in October.

Minutes: On a motion by MPT Wilkinson and second by CM Dennison, the August 19 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

Department reports: Mayor Calvo reported that he attended Greenbelt's Labor Day parade and closely observed the line-up. Many politicians participated as this year is an important election year. Candidates marched mostly at the head of the parade, which worked well. He suggested the Town obtain a copy of Greer's parade protocol for next year's Berwyn Heights Day parade. Mayor Calvo further reported that a burglary occurred at a vacant home on Tecumseh Street over the weekend, and copper pipes were stolen. A new scrap yard recently opened in Beltsville, which may provide additional incentive for scrap dealers to accept metals. Residents and landlords are advised to inform the police when their homes are vacant, so the police can perform house checks during their patrols.

CM Kulpa-Eddy reported that Code Director Solomon resigned. Two part-time officers and a part-time clerk are working to stay on top of the work load. Their goal will be on rental properties to make sure they are licensed and properly maintained. Vacant properties, including foreclosures, are also being monitored. Residents are encouraged to report any code issues they notice to the Town office, where TA Murphy is now the acting Code Director. TA Murphy said that the hours of the part-time Code staff has been increased.

MPT Wilkinson reported that the Public Works Department has installed several dog waste stations around Town in places where dog waste tends to accumulate: Lake Artemesia parking lot, Ruatan Street at Berwyn Road, the 60th Avenue footpath and in the back of the Community Center near the flagpole.

CM Almoguera announced that Pop's Park playground is now open. The grand reopening celebration will take place on September 7 in conjunction with the family BBQ. All are invited to this once yearly 'block party' at the playground. She will provide a list of things Public Works can do to make sure the park is ready for the celebration. CM Dennison announced other upcoming events.

Citizen comments: Mayor Calvo received a comment from a 3rd grader about Pop's Park having been rebuilt for little kids. He also received two comments about a variance request the Council recently supported for a shed on Charlton Avenue. They were under the mistaken impression that the shed would be erected in the yard. He received multiple comments about the water main break that occurred in the 5600 block of Berwyn Road last week, in which several basements flooded. Affected residents reported that WSSC was quick to repair the damage. MPT Wilkinson received a number of positive comments about the Safe Routes to School grant Berwyn Heights was awarded to build a sidewalk in the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue and improve a pedestrian crossing at the school.

Safe Routes To School grant implementation: MPT Wilkinson said that he requested this item because the Town has to take some steps to move forward. TA Murphy said he attempted to call SHA last Friday, but SHA was closed due to furloughs. He will call again this week.

Ordinance 118 - Roads & Rights-of-Ways: Mayor Calvo asked if TA Murphy has been able to get clarification on the issues the Council raised at the last meeting. TA Murphy said he has not yet heard back from the people he contacted. Mayor Calvo asked not to place the Ordinance on the agenda until additional information requested has been obtained.

2. PUBLIC WORKS

BHES pedestrian safety: MPT Wilkinson said that he would like to request Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) to make curb cuts where the pedestrian ramp leads up from the lower parking lot to the community center, and at the end of the sidewalk adjacent to the school driveway entrance. This would make the ramp ADA accessible and easier to use for people with strollers and bicycles. In addition, he would like to request that the Community Center marquee be moved back to improve visibility for cars exiting the lower parking lot. Principal Singer has no objections. He would like to get the Council's input before he makes a formal request. The Council had no objections.

Champion Energy electric supplier: TA Murphy explained that the Town has entered into a new 2 year contract with a new electricity supplier, Champion Energy, at a rate of 0.0899 per kWh. This is lower than the rate the Town is currently paying. The vendor requested that their name (Champion Energy Services) and the rate be reported in the minutes. Mayor Calvo said that there are no objections to including the information in the minutes, but he questions whether the Council needed to approve this. TA Murphy noted that the Town buys its electricity on the open market, and thereby saves a considerable amount of money.

3. ADMINISTRATION

Bulletin cover: The following items were approved for the Bulletin cover: Halloween theme, headlines for Trunk or Treat and Lake Artemesia concert, jumps for hearing on 63rd Avenue school zone, Trick-or-Treat.

Nothing was reported under **4. Code Compliance, 5. Parks & Recreation, and 6. Public Safety.**

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION (9:17 P.M. – 10:12 P.M.)

CM Kulpa-Eddy moved and CM Dennison seconded to go into executive session regarding a personnel matter. With matter discussed CM Kulpa-Eddy moved and CM Dennison seconded to end the executive session.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Signed: Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk

Copyright © Town of Berwyn Heights.